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THE STORY OF WISCONSIN, 1634-1848

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CHAPTER II—THE RED MEN AND THE FUR TRADE

A large portion of the surface of Wisconsin is covered with small heaps of earth or mounds that are without doubt the work of man and not of nature. The formation of these earthworks was formerly attributed to a pre-Indian race of men known collectively as the Mound Builders; modern archaeologists, however, have repudiated the theory of a pre-historic race, and now are certain that the true mound builders were none other than the Indians. A peculiar kind of mound occurs in southern and central Wisconsin and in the neighboring regions of northern Illinois, eastern Iowa, and south-eastern Minnesota, that is not found elsewhere in the United States. These are the effigy mounds, slight eminences that have the outline of deer, bears, panthers, turtles, various kinds of birds, and in one or two instances of man. The origin of these effigy mounds has been much discussed. It is now accepted by scientists that their makers were a tribe known to the first discoverers of the Northwest as the Puant or Winnebago Indians.

The great number and extent of the mounds scattered over the surface of Wisconsin indicates the presence of a large Indian population in prehistoric times; but at what era in the world's history, or in what way the Winnebago reached Wisconsin is not known. The Winnebago belong to the Siouan division of Indian peoples, and their aboriginal name for themselves was Hochungara or O-chunk-o-raw, "speakers of the parent language." Their nearest affinities are with the Omaha, Oto, Iowa, and Missouri to whom they claim to be elder brothers. There is much difference of opinion among ethnologists concerning the first home of the Siouan peoples,

some thinking that they migrated from the Atlantic coast plain down the Ohio to its mouth, where divisions occurred, which severally occupied the lower Mississippi, the upper Mississippi, and the Missouri valleys. More recent investigators place the early home of these peoples north of Lake Superior, in which case the Winnebago must have crossed the straits of Mackinac and advanced into Wisconsin at a very early period. From the size of certain trees growing upon artificial mounds, it is inferred that the settlement of the Winnebago in Wisconsin must have occurred some time before the discovery of America by Columbus.

The Winnebago, who peopled Wisconsin's valleys and built their mounds along her streams and lakes, were in what is known as the Stone Age of primitive culture. Contrary to the common belief they were not a wandering but a home-loving people, devotedly attached to the places of their birth, the homes of their fathers, and the sites of their villages. These villages were so advantageously placed that the sites of most of Wisconsin's present cities were those once occupied by Indian towns. The woods and streams supplied their simple needs of food, clothing, and shelter. From the skins of animals they fashioned their garments; by hunting, and by harvesting wild rice, they gained their food. Their lodges were built of slender trees covered with bark and with mats formed of plaited reeds. Gradually they learned a rude form of agriculture; by cultivating the ground with hoes of bone and plows of wood, corn and pumpkins were raised for food. They had no domestic animals except dogs, which also served as an addition to their food supply. Their tools and implements of warfare and of the chase were made of stone. Flints chipped to a point tipped their arrows; axes and hatchets were of edged stone; war clubs swung a heavy stone head. The only metals known were lead and copper. The former, mined in a crude fashion, was mostly used for ornament. Copper secured by intertribal trade from Lake

Superior was beaten by hand into ornamental shapes, and occasionally used to tip weapons and domestic implements.

The change of seasons brought to Wisconsin Indians changed modes of living. During the winter they left their permanent villages and in small groups scattered through the forests subsisting as best they might on the products of the chase. They built temporary wigwams of pelts thrown over poles, within which fires were kindled that kept them from freezing. Upon the return of spring they sought their villages and cornfields. The summer was the time for religious rites, for council, and for warfare. Raids upon neighboring enemy groups were a normal part of the Indian's life. In every village a council house was built where questions of war and alliance were discussed by the chiefs and elders. The religious rites clustered about a unit resembling a clan; the effigy mounds were the symbols of the clan totems. Near to these totems burial mounds were placed. The sacred mysteries of the tribe and the clan were there celebrated.

Aside from warfare, intercourse was maintained with other tribes by means of trade. The extent and volume of intertribal trade was considerable. Sea shells found in Wisconsin mounds prove that they had passed from hand to hand among all the tribes between its inhabitants and the Atlantic coast. Shells, bits of metal, articles of dress and ornament constituted the bulk of the exchange. Shells pierced and strung or wrought into belts were both the medium of exchange and the binding symbol for intertribal treaties and agreements. While the fate of captives taken in war was horrible, envoys were sacred, and treaties were observed inviolate.

The red man's life was by no means an idyl, such as children of nature have been supposed to lead. Famine and disease stalked his footsteps; war and wild animals carried away his youth; struggle and hardships made up his lot in life. None the less it is open to question whether the contact

with the white man did not make the condition of the Indian worse. He soon became dependent upon the former's products for clothing, implements, and weapons. He forgot the arts of his primitive economy. Urged on by the greed of traders he rapidly killed off the wild game or drove it farther into the wilderness, which he had to penetrate in order to secure the store of furs with which to purchase his necessities. Thus hunting became more and more important to his existence, and with increased efforts and superior weapons brought ever diminishing returns. The red man became dependent upon the trader for the very means of life. After the French and Indian War, when all traders of the French race were withdrawn from Wisconsin, the English traders who after a lapse of two years went to Lake Superior found naked, starving savages, who in less than one hundred years had ceased to be self-sufficing, and could live only by means of relations with white men. Thus arose the fur trade, which was not only a commercial or an economic régime, but a system of government, a form of social life, a means of exploitation, and a stage in the development of the American frontier.

THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN

For one hundred and forty years after the discovery of America by Columbus Wisconsin's forests slept in quiet, unvexed by the presence of any but their red children. Then suddenly out of the East, and skirting the coasts of Green Bay in a bark canoe driven by strange red men, the first white man came, and "women and children fled at the sight of a man who carried thunder in both hands—for thus they called the two pistols that he held." "He wore a grand robe of China damask, all strewn with flowers and birds of many colors." "They meet him; they escort him, and carry all his baggage." They call him the Manitouiriniou, the wonderful or godlike man. From all quarters they haste to see him until four or five thousand are assembled. "Each of the chief men

made a feast for him, and at one of these banquets they served at least six score Beavers.”³ Then the mysterious stranger made a peace with them, under such forms and ceremonies as were customary in intertribal negotiations, and vanished into the East whence he had come.

To the whites who had crossed the ocean to begin a small colony on the banks of the St. Lawrence this first white stranger to visit Wisconsin was known as Jean Nicolet. He had come to the New World with the express purpose of dealing with the red men, learning their languages and customs, and opening a way into their country for trade and missions. Sent by Champlain, the founder of New France, to dwell among the forest inhabitants, Nicolet spent several years among the Algonquian Indians of the upper Ottawa River; then he visited the Huron in the peninsula between Lake Erie and Georgian Bay. There he heard of a far western tribe known as the “people of salt water,” whom Nicolet supposed must dwell on the borders of the Western sea, and whence the way would lead to the tribes of Tartary. Instead of a route to Cathay, however, Nicolet found merely a new tribe of Indians whose name—the Winnebago—meant equally “people of the salt water” or “people of bad-smelling springs,” and who were known henceforth to the French as the Puants or Stinkards.

After Nicolet’s advent to Wisconsin in 1634, no more of these mysterious white strangers disturbed the dwellers on Lake Michigan and Green Bay for over twenty years. Nevertheless in these far regions great changes were taking place, due to the widespread disturbance in Indian geography caused by the coming of the white man. Upon the peninsula of Ontario, then occupied by the Huron tribesmen, missionaries some years before the voyage of Nicolet had begun what proved to be the largest and most successful of their missions. Throughout all the Huron villages the Jesuits preached. Later, impelled by a desire to evangelize distant Indians, two

³ *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, XVI, 1-3.

of the fathers in 1641 accompanied some of their neophytes to the shores of Lake Superior, and named the strait, where the waters leap down from this mighty basin, the Sault de Ste. Marie.

But the Huron were not long left in peace. Suddenly from central New York appeared large bands of their hereditary enemies, the Iroquois. By one blow after another the Huron missions were destroyed. Some of the Jesuits fell martyrs to their cause; others escaping sought refuge with the remnants of their mission children under the cliffs of Quebec. The remainder of the Huron fled westward; their alarm was communicated to the Algonquian peoples living beyond them, and for fear of the Iroquois whole tribes left their ancestral homes for shelter in the farther forests. It happened that shortly before this disturbance the Winnebago of southern and central Wisconsin had suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Illinois tribes living to the south, wherein they were so reduced in numbers that but a small fragment of the former tribe was left in its Wisconsin home. Into this sparsely settled land the fugitives from Ontario and Michigan poured by both southern and northern routes. They hid from the pursuing Iroquois in the swamps and marshes of our state, and the Winnebago, being in no condition to resist, made alliances with the intruding tribes, and yielded to them new homes on the lakes and streams where their own ancestors had dwelt. Thus came the Sauk and Foxes, the Miami, Mascouten, and Kickapoo. Thus, pressed down from the north and the islands of Lake Michigan, came the Menominee and Potawatomi to mingle with the Winnebago around Green Bay; while the Huron and Ottawa, impelled by a more dreadful fear, sought refuge on the southern shores of Lake Superior and about the head waters of Black River. Thus in the middle of the seventeenth century Wisconsin became crowded with Indian villages, and was sustaining a larger number of red inhabitants than at any other

time throughout her history. This aggregation of tribesmen conditioned her discovery and exploration, and made her a region tempting both to the French fur trader and to the French missionary of the cross.

MISSIONARIES AND TRADERS

Before the dispersion of tribes incident to the Iroquois wars the Huron and their neighbors had learned the value of the white men's goods, and had ventured as far as Three Rivers and Montreal, there to exchange their skins and robes for the weapons, clothing, and trinkets that the white men had taught them to covet. Immediately there sprang up an intertribal trade that extended so far westward that tribes which had never seen a white man became familiar with his wares. The Ottawa Indians were especially skillful in trade, and so long acted as middlemen for the western tribes that all the region of the Upper Lakes was called by the French the Ottawa country.

The Iroquois wars of the middle of the seventeenth century interrupted the northwest trade and both the colony of New France and the interior tribes suffered from the break in the intercourse. Of the two, the French suffered the more, because the Indians had not yet forgotten their wilderness lore and were able to be self-sufficing. The lack of the annual harvest of furs from the Northwest had almost ruined the little French colony along the St. Lawrence, when suddenly it was gladdened by the arrival of a caravan of Indians at Three Rivers that came to exchange its hoarded treasure of peltry over northern streams and portages, uninfested by the dreaded Iroquois. Prosperity once more promised for Canada, the Indian visitors were royally treated, and when they embarked for their return voyage two young Canadians accompanied them, and wandered for two years or more among the tribes of the Northwest learning their customs and languages, and teaching them the white man's arts.

The explorations of Radisson and Grosseilliers during the latter half of the sixth decade of the seventeenth century were not known to historians until the journals of Radisson were discovered late in the nineteenth century in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. They were written in English, by one unfamiliar with that language, and their descriptions are so vague that it yet remains an open question where these explorers went, and whether or not they were the first white men to view the Mississippi River.

Radisson and Grosseilliers made a second voyage to the Ottawa Country two or more years after their first adventure. Upon this occasion they explored Lake Superior, and the headwaters of the Mississippi, and passed a desolate and famishing winter probably on the Wisconsin shore of Chequamegon Bay.

Meanwhile the first white missionary to Wisconsin had lost his life in her northern forests. Father René Ménard in 1660 came to the Northwest with a returning party of trading Indians. They abandoned him on the shore of Keweenaw Bay and after a wretched winter he started with one companion to visit the Huron fugitives, formerly members of the Ontario mission, then thought to be in hiding on the headwaters of Black River. While descending the Wisconsin in a tiny craft, the reverend father stepped aside at some one of its upper portages and was lost in the forest. Whether he was slain by beast or Indian or perished from starvation is not known; no trace of his fate was ever found.

In 1665 the colony of New France was reënforced by a regiment of soldiers; the next year Iroquois enemies were punished and forced to conclude a reluctant peace. Thereafter the wilderness waterways became safer and traders and missionaries again sought the tribesmen in the Wisconsin forests. Notable among the traders was Nicolas Perrot, who in 1665 began a career of discovery and exploration in Wisconsin that lasted over thirty years. Among the mis-

sionaries Father Claude Allouez was a pioneer. His first mission in 1665 was on the shore of Chequamegon Bay, where for two years he instructed large bands of Indians from all the Wisconsin region. Even the Illinois visited the good father in his northern home, and listened for the first time to the gospel message. In 1669 Allouez transferred his ministrations to the neighborhood of Green Bay where among the Menominee, Potawatomi, and Sauk of the Bay shore, the Foxes on the Wolf, and the Miami, Mascouten, and Kickapoo of the upper Fox Valley he founded missions, and worked with unflagging zeal for the conversion of their souls. The first permanent building in Wisconsin was the mission of St. François Xavier established in 1671 at the De Pere rapids of Fox River by Allouez and his fellow workers. The following decade was the most flourishing in the Jesuit missionary history of Wisconsin. After 1682 their influence and success began to wane, and by the close of the century was almost extinct.

In the meantime the King of France had in 1671 staged a pageant on the far shore of Sault Ste. Marie wherein his representative, Simon François Daumont Sieur de St. Luson, took possession of all the western country for the French sovereignty. Nicolas Perrot was sent in advance to notify the Wisconsin tribesmen, and persuade them to send chiefs as representatives on this great occasion. With wondering awe the simple savages watched the impressive ceremony wherein priests and warriors chanted the praise both of God and of the great King Louis XIV, and declared the latter's benevolence in annexing the Indians' country to his own domain. All unwittingly they assented to an acknowledgment that made them thenceforth subjects of a foreign monarch. Some years afterward Perrot was sent as governor general of the new French territory west of Lake Michigan. He built therein a number of French posts, most of them upon the Mississippi. At Fort St. Antoine on Lake Pepin

in 1689 Perrot took possession for France of the Sioux territory lying along the upper waters of America's greatest river. He likewise was the first white man to explore the lead mines of southern Wisconsin. So long as he ruled in the West, French trade and French influence was supreme and the Indians of Wisconsin were his docile instruments.

Wisconsin's great waterway to the Mississippi River was first traversed in 1673 by Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette. Seven years later Daniel Greysolon Duluth, who had previously threaded the upper portage from Lake Superior to the Mississippi, came eastward by the Fox-Wisconsin route from the Sioux country. By these two voyages connection was established between Wisconsin's portage route and both the lower and the upper Mississippi.

Rapid changes in the Indian geography of Wisconsin occurred during the last twenty years of the seventeenth century. The population that had massed along the Fox-Wisconsin waterway was pressing upon the food supply. Moreover, in 1680 Robert Cavelier de La Salle took possession of the Illinois River Valley, and invited the Wisconsin Indians to remove thither for a permanent home. The Miami, Mascouten, and Kickapoo acceded to his request; the Potawatomi likewise moved south along the shore of Lake Michigan; the Foxes ventured from Wolf River to the river now called by their name. The Menominee surrounded Green Bay; the Sauk and Foxes controlled the Fox-Wisconsin waterway; the Winnebago occupied the upper Rock River. The Huron and Ottawa left northern Wisconsin for homes on the Strait of Mackinac; all the southern shore of Lake Superior was abandoned to the Chippewa, who at intervals continued their hereditary wars upon the Sioux of the St. Croix and upper Mississippi valleys.

THE FRENCH FUR TRADE

Along with the shifting of tribal homes grew up changes in the method of handling the fur trade. The Indian hunters

no longer made yearly pilgrimages to Montreal to exchange their gathered peltry for the white man's goods. Instead the white men came to them offering their wares, and with tribal consent built in their country at convenient places little log forts where an officer and a few soldiers kept order over the motley crowd of traders and *coureurs de bois* that enriched themselves by the wilderness traffic. Most of the traders were licensed by the government and subjected to strict rules for the conduct of their trade. The illegal trader, however, flourished, and followed his Indian customers into the depths of the forest, beyond the reach of the orders and regulations enforced by the commandants at the wayside posts. These unlicensed traders carried to the red man the alcoholic liquors the white man had taught him to crave; and in disregard of the regulations of the French government the Indian grew more and more debauched and degraded by his association with the whites. International rivalry also occurred in the fur trade. Radisson, who had explored the western forests for the French, deserted to the English government, and in 1670 aided in forming the Hudson's Bay Company, that greatest of all fur trade monopolies, which after nearly two hundred fifty years is still the greatest fur company in the world. Its traders early penetrated to the north shore of Lake Superior, and drew away many Indians who had previously contributed to the wealth of Canada. The English also attempted to secure the Northwest fur trade by the route of the Great Lakes. Utilizing the Iroquois as middlemen, the tribes of Wisconsin were tempted to carry their wares to white men, who paid a larger price for furs and gave better goods in return than those of the French merchants.

Thus through illegal traders and foreign rivals the French fur trade was by the close of the seventeenth century so demoralized that the Canadian authorities, spurred thereto by the missionaries, determined upon drastic measures. All licenses for traders were revoked, and in 1696 a decree went

forth that all the Northwest posts should be evacuated and that missionaries should be the only white men allowed in the Ottawa country. It was thought that the old custom of yearly caravans to the St. Lawrence would be revived; thus governmental control could be exercised over the trade, and the aborigines protected. These measures were only partially successful. *Coueurs de bois* refused to obey the summons to return to New France, and shamelessly brought in English goods; soldiers deserted from the garrisons before evacuation, married among the Indian tribes, and introduced the white man's arts. Albany and Hudson Bay traders vigorously pressed their advantage, and the Canadian authorities feared that the whole of the Northwest trade would slip from their control.

This danger of disintegration was checked by two events that occurred in the first year of the eighteenth century by which the French recovered their morale, and resumed operations in the Northwest. The first of these was the founding of Detroit, a post whose position barred the English from the upper lakes. The second was the peace with the Iroquois which was signed at Montreal after a great ceremony and an exchange of prisoners among all the warring tribes. The license system for the fur trade was then restored, the *coueurs de bois* called in by proclaiming pardons for past offenses, and the policy of control by posts and garrisons was reestablished throughout the Northwest.

The establishment of Detroit caused new changes in the Indian geography of Wisconsin. The Miami and Mascouten entirely withdrew from the state, and moved eastward towards the new post. The Potawatomi progressed southward around the bend of Lake Michigan, while the Winnebago filled in the vacant territory near Lake Winnebago, and along the Rock River Valley. In 1706 a large portion of the Fox and Sauk tribes deserted Wisconsin and settled in the vicinity of Detroit, whither the Ottawa and Huron

from the neighborhood of Mackinac had preceded them. This new accumulation of savage peoples did not long dwell in harmony. In 1712 a fierce intertribal quarrel broke out in which the commandant of Detroit took sides against the Wisconsin tribesmen. Many of the Sauk, Foxes, and Kickapoo were slain; the remainder fled back to their former homes in Wisconsin, where the remnant of these tribes waged barbaric warfare against the French for over thirty years. This hostility closed the Fox-Wisconsin waterway to French traders, rendered their lives insecure on all the western pathways, and greatly diminished French influence in the far Northwest.

In the course of these Fox wars the first military invasion of Wisconsin occurred when in 1716 Louis La Porte Sieur Louvigny led a considerable army of Canadian soldiers, accompanied by a miscellaneous host of traders, voyageurs, and Indians, through Green Bay to the Fox fort at Little Butte des Morts. The Foxes withstood for a time a considerable siege, which ended in a compromise with the invading forces. The succeeding year a French post was built on the site of Fort Howard that was maintained until the fall of the French sovereignty in the New World. In 1718 in order to develop the copper mines that were thought to exist on the shores of Lake Superior an official post was built at Chequamegon. From 1727 to 1750 in order to exploit the fur trade among the Sioux several French posts were erected on the upper Mississippi. Chequamegon and the Mississippi posts were abandoned during the French and Indian War. In 1743 a French post was erected on the Mississippi near the lead mines, where a beginning was made in developing this industry. Thus the French found copper, lead, and furs in Wisconsin, the most valuable of which was peltry.

After the Fox wars were over the fur trade grew with startling rapidity, and the only rivals to the Canadian traders were the French merchants from Louisiana, the northern

boundary of which lay between the Rock and Wisconsin rivers. In 1752 the Green Bay post was leased to a relative of the reigning governor, who exploited it so dishonestly that the Marquis of Montcalm declared, "Never have theft and license gone so far." ⁴ The yearly harvest of Wisconsin furs was from five hundred to six hundred packs, valued at a quarter of a million dollars.

Peculation and dishonesty led to the downfall of New France. Unprotected by rapacious officials the lilies of France fell before the cross of St. George and St. Andrew, and the British replaced the French not only on the St. Lawrence, but along the Great Lakes and in the eastern part of the Mississippi Valley.

DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF THE FUR TRADE UNDER THE BRITISH

The change from French to British sovereignty in Wisconsin was not accompanied by any marked upheaval in the little hamlets and among the Indian villages of the western wilderness. Most of the French traders transferred their allegiance to the new sovereign with only mild regrets. The earliest British officers were conciliatory in attitude, and the Indians docilely exchanged their French medals and flags for those of England. The British traders employed the same voyageurs and *coureurs de bois* as had served the traffic under the French régime. The language most in use in Wisconsin's forests continued to be French. Beyond the bounds of Wisconsin there was much discontent, which culminated in the revolt known as Pontiac's Conspiracy. In this uprising Wisconsin tribesmen, almost alone among those of the Northwest, refused to participate. Possibly the old grievances against the French, repressed since the Fox wars, still rankled, and made Wisconsin Indians more favorable to their new British masters. Be this as it may, the garrison at Green Bay was escorted by friendly and protecting tribesmen to

⁴*Ibid.*, XVIII, 206.

Mackinac, and there aided in rescuing the captured British officers from the hands of the hostile Chippewa and Ottawa. When Sir William Johnson met the Indian chiefs at Niagara in 1764, he signalized the loyalty of the Wisconsin Menominee by presenting to their chief a medal and a certificate.⁵

With the withdrawal of the garrison from Green Bay in 1763, Wisconsin's British post was permanently abandoned. Thenceforward the metropolis of the fur trade was at Mackinac, where each summer a great mart was held. Traders brought from Canada an abundance of goods for forest traffic, and exchanged them for the peltry that had been gathered during the previous winter and spring at dozens of small posts throughout the West.

With the growth of the trade subsidiary marts were established, and the one in Wisconsin at Prairie du Chien became next in importance to that at Mackinac.

The first years of the British trade in Wisconsin were years of unregulated and fierce competition between rival traders and rival companies. Slight restraints were imposed by the post officers, who in most cases participated in the profits of the traffic. Therefore this unrestricted rivalry wrought great havoc among both the fur-bearing animals and their red hunters. Liquor became the ordinary medium of exchange. The traders' outfits were largely composed of kegs of beverages, and so fierce were the drunken orgies of the Indians that it seemed that they would soon exterminate themselves. The traders in like measure grew demoralized, and employed all kinds of subterfuges to secure the advantage. Even murder and robbery went unpunished, and the law of force and cunning ruled the forests.

Excess of competition finally suggested its own remedy. In 1778 a representative group of Canadian merchants made at Mackinac a temporary combination to control the trade. Two years later the agreement was renewed, and became in 1783 the basis of the North West Fur Company, a powerful

⁵ *Ibid.*, 268-69.

organization of Scotch and French Canadian merchants who controlled the Canadian trade for a third of a century. About the same time the Mackinac Company was formed, whose operations lay farther south than those of the North West Company. In 1786 the Mackinac Company had a post opposite the mouth of the Missouri, and was competing for the trade of Spanish Louisiana.

The Spanish strove unsuccessfully to bar the British traders from the trans-Mississippi. The lower Missouri trade they succeeded in possessing, but that of the waters of the upper Mississippi and the Minnesota (then called the St. Peters) was practically in the hands of the Scotch from Canada. All this upriver trade centered at Prairie du Chien, and was supplied by means of the Fox-Wisconsin waterway.

The headquarters of the North West Company lay on the northwest shore of Lake Superior; two subsidiary posts in Wisconsin—at Fond du Lac of the great lake and at Madeline Island—served the interior forts along the southern shore of Lake Superior. Around these posts small communities gradually grew up, composed chiefly of retired voyageurs and engagées no longer able to endure the hardships of forest wintering. These occupied themselves with a primitive type of agriculture, and supplied the products to the active traders. The most important of these settlements was at Green Bay, where before the close of the French régime a few families had settled. Thither after Pontiac's Conspiracy, the Langlades removed from Mackinac, and by their superior education and ability became the recognized leaders of the little community. Charles Langlade, called the "Father of Wisconsin," had been an officer in the French-Canadian army. Under the British he held a commission in the Indian Department, and his influence over both the white and the red men of Wisconsin was unbounded. It was Langlade, who during the American Revolution rallied the Wisconsin Indians for participation in the defense of Canada

and in the invasion of Burgoyne. It was due to his loyalty to the British that George Rogers Clark's agents had so little success in detaching Wisconsin Indians for the American alliance. It was Langlade who was depended upon to protect the Wisconsin settlements against the dangers from the Spanish of Louisiana; and upon his death in 1801 the French-Canadian settlements in Wisconsin mourned a protector and leader. His leadership fell into the hands of his descendants and relatives, the Grignons and Gautiers, who were allied to the better families of Green Bay and Prairie du Chien. The patriarchal condition of society in Wisconsin lasted until the coming of the Americans, who with their democracy and energy broke down the class system founded on the fur trade hierarchy, and introduced the elements of modern life into the trading posts and settlements that grew up during the fur trade régime. In the fur trade the bourgeois or master trader was all powerful; his will and the exigencies of the traffic were the sole source of authority. To make this more binding, each voyageur and engagé was obliged before leaving the main trading post to sign a contract by which he bound himself in consideration of a small wage and certain supplies "to serve, obey, and faithfully execute all that the said Sieurs his Bourgeois * * * shall lawfully and honestly order him to do; without trading on his own account, nor absenting himself from nor leaving the said service."⁶ This constituted a species of peonage which to the honor of the fur trading fraternity was seldom abused. In truth the tie that bound master and man was not purely economic; it was composed of personal elements of loyalty and attachment. It was compounded from two loyalties—the French system of subordination and responsibility, and the Scotch Highlander's attachment to the head of his clan, and the clan leader's obligations therefor.

Many of the prominent traders of Wisconsin were Scotchmen, and in the War of 1812 they commanded retinues

⁶ See a specimen engagement contract in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, XIX, 343.

of voyageurs and Indians who successively captured Mackinac, and Prairie du Chien, and drove every American from the vicinity. These traders fondly hoped and loudly boasted that new boundaries would be drawn and the territory now Wisconsin would become a fur trading preserve. Disappointed in that hope, they planned to adjust the exigencies of the forest trade to the demands of the American system. The Mackinac Company was dissolved and in its stead was organized the American Fur Company, many of whose operators were the Scotch Canadians who had been partners in the British concern. For twenty years after the American occupation the new Company conducted a flourishing trade along the old lines. From 1816 to 1824 the United States sought to better the Indians' condition by the so-called Factory system, government posts operated not for profit but for benevolence towards its Indian wards. The Factory system failed because of the powerful opposition of the American Fur Company, and because the factors were unacquainted with the conditions of Indian trade.

Gradually the fur trade, which for two hundred years had ruled Wisconsin, declined. The local traders, deeply in debt to Astor's monopoly, the American Fur Company, mortgaged their lands and lost them. Of recent years a new commerce in furs has sprung up and grows increasingly valuable. But the fur trade as a régime passed from Wisconsin with the coming of the Americans and the development of modern industries.

(To be continued)